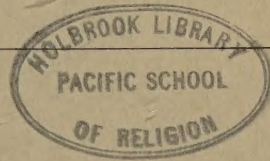


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THE CHRISTIAN QUARTERLY

A Theological Journal representing the viewpoint of those holding the Restoration Ideal and looking forward to the unity of God's people through the proper application of this ideal; the ultimate goal being the Evangelization of the World.

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Box 9632, Oklahoma City 18, Oklahoma

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BOOK REVIEWS

The Christian In Philosophy

THE CHRISTIAN IN PHILOSOPHY

J. V. Langmead Casserley: *The Christian In Philosophy*. New York; Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951.

In my opinion this is one of the finest books on Philosophy in recent years. It is very cogent. The book attempts a "discussion of the relation of Christian thought to the progress of Western philosophy, and the method the Christian Philosopher must adopt in facing contemporary problems." There are two parts to the book: Part I dealing with "Past Record of the Christian in Philosophy" and Part II dealing with the "Present Opportunity of the Christian in Philosophy". In Part I Casserley shows the interaction of biblical religion with Philosophy and the resulting synthesis of Christian Philosophy. This is dealt with under four chapter headings: 1. From Paul to Augustine. 2. The Mediaeval Philosophers (This chapter is especially good in stressing a period often neglected). 3. Rationalists and Empiricists. 4. Kant and His Successors. In these chapters he deals with every major philosopher who contributed either positively or negatively to the construction of Christian philosophy down through the ages. In Part II we find these chapter headings: 1. The Problem of the Christian Philosopher Objectively Stated (in which he deals with the problem of semantics, the singular and paradox). 2. The Problem of the Christian Subjectively Stated. 3. The Bible and the Christian Philosopher. 4. The Function of the Christian Philosopher. We quote the concluding paragraph of the book to show what Casserley is trying to get

at in discussing the role of the Christian Philosopher: "To interpret the world to the Church and the Church to the world, to discern and define the possibility of no mere accommodation, but of a genuinely creative synthesis of their diverse points of view, to convince each of its need of the other, so that a militant Church can only function in the spiritual conquest of a temporal world, so that the temporal world can only achieve unity, meaning and objective worth in a triumphant Church, this is the high prophetic office of a Christian philosophy so rigorously philosophical that the most obstinately "pure" philosopher will admit it to his discussions, and at the same time so manifestly a way of grace that the simplest and most unphilosophical Christian will remember it in his prayers". (p. 262)

As I stated in the outset this is one of the most rewarding volumes that I have read in some time. There are places wherein I am critical of Casserley's viewpoint, but on the whole, it presents the picture in a fair, impartial way and gives great incentive to a study of Philosophy from the Christian viewpoint.

Charles Gresham

BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION AND PROPHECY

Richard C. Mills

AN INQUIRY

A brief discussion such as this cannot attempt to take up all the intricate issues relative to the prophetic literature. The very nature of the discussion will limit these considerations to the basic issues relative to the main problem which confront us when we attempt to interpret the prophets.

MODERNIZING THE PROPHETS

The so-called "modernists" are not the few ones who have modernized the prophets. At the start we are all faced with presuppositions, the preconceptions, the misconceptions, the religious prejudices belonging to the heritage of traditional belief that is ours. The individual prophet claims that he has none of these prejudices, but he has also added this naive misconception of his own innocence.

We must admit our dependence on the deductions and prolonged research of others, and the influence of both learned and unlearned teachers in the course of our lives. Our heritage is TRUTH PLUS the traditions of men, Judaistic and Ecclesiastical. When we have witnessed in the prophets something that is timeless, something of eternal dimension, and since our interests are predominantly in our own time, we are inclined to modernize the prophets, to make them speak to our day and allow them to say very little of their own day.

This modernization is not too surprising in view of the many problems of a thorough and consistent interpretation of all that has been written in our Scriptures.

THE PROBLEM OF LANGUAGE AND TIME

A translation itself must struggle with the problems of interpretation, and the translator has come between the reader and the original writer. There is the problem

of language and semantics, in which a foreign language and differing modes of thought have also come between the reader and the original message. Separating us from the original event of a prophet's life is a great gulf created by time and circumstance. We are in another age, in another country, using another language, with other idioms and preconceptions of another race of people. The "gulf" can be bridged, but with difficulty.

THE PROBLEM OF EXTERNAL IMPINGMENTS

We add to our problems of interpretation by accepting human decisions as to what can be an "orthodox" interpretation and what must be "unorthodox". Dogmas and external authorities are imposed upon the literature of the Bible, as men go to the Bible looking for certain constants, certain ideas that must be present in every chapter. They are forced by their very allegations of the Scriptures to prevent these Scriptures from saying anything that in their minds might be unworthy of such literature, or anything that would be superfluous to their own day and need.

The Roman Catholic Church finds in the Scriptures the teachings of their church. This is ecclesiastical control of interpretation. According to a papal encyclical of 1893, "Any interpretation that finds contradictions in the Scriptures or finds the Scriptures contradicting the teaching of the Roman Catholic church is either 'foolish or false'." In Protestantism there is the "cult control" or interpretation, and as in Judaism, nothing can be interpreted in a way that goes against the tradition.

Faith becomes opposed to reason, and ancient events become clothed in twentieth century garb as the Scriptures are modernized and the historical characters are lost to their historical backgrounds. Amos again must hear the discouraging rebuke, "prophesy no more at Bethel," for he must speak only to this age, irrespective of what his message to Bethel may have been! The message of Isaiah, the royal prophet, can not have any meaning to Ahaz, the foolish king of Judah, for Isaiah must be understood only in the light of another age.

THE PROBLEMS OF RIGID SCHEMES OF INTERPRETATION

Rigid schemes of interpretation have been set up to oppose capricious freedom in interpretation; the divine has been set over against the human, so that there can be nothing human at all in the Scriptures, as if they had never been touched by human hands in copying, translating, arranging into books and chapters and verses and other artificial and unchronological divisions. The prophet has often been viewed as nothing more than a robot, or one who was only interested in those times far beyond his own. The element of inspiration can not be rigidly defined any more than God can be rigidly defined, and the unyielding theories of the dogmatists are a hindrance rather than a help to a correct interpretation of prophecy.

THE PROBLEM OF NO RULE AT ALL

In many cases no consistent rules of interpretation have been used at all. The interpretation may be literal, spiritual, allegorical, historical, depending on the arbitrary decision of a prejudiced mind. Like Tertullian, such an interpreter may hold the Scriptures to be infallible and to contain no variation in degrees of inspiration, and yet hold private judgment as a natural and inalienable right, although he will deny it to others.

We need to listen to Jesus again: "And why do you transgress the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition? (Math. 15:3)." "In vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men, (Mt. 15:9)."

PROPHECY VS. THEOLOGICAL TREATISES

The writings of the Old Testament Prophets are not theological treatises, any more than were Paul's hurried notes to the churches. They are writings expressing, from the truly religious viewpoint of course, the varied interests and needs of the Hebrew-Jewish community in its historical development. The religious beliefs are implicit though not generally openly asserted.

Neither are the prophetic writings supramundane. The pages of the Old Testament pulsate with the throbbing life of its colorful characters. Their robust deeds and virile, uninhibited conduct, so frankly recounted, amply demonstrate that man is very much alive in this literature. In books regarded as sacred... and revered as the revealed word of God is to be found also in the word of man. Man in the Bible is not the man of conventional Christian art-dressed in spotless garments with an expressionless face, and usually posing in a lifeless manner in the foreground of a somewhat dreary landscape. On the contrary, man is sketched with vivid realism and absolute hon-

esty. Possibly this realism of the Bible, which projects with cogency and power both the nature of the highest that can be known about the universe and the unvarnished truth about man is the reason for its effectiveness in confronting men with themselves and with God.

Such Biblical characters were too busy living out God's will for their lives to worry about theories of inspiration and revelation and infallible records. The Prophet's message, the same as Paul's message, was not believed just because he said it or wrote it. They sought to appeal to the thinking and emotions of a people faced with important decisions. The life and the message preceded the "Bible."

THE DIVINE STAMP AND THE PRESENCE OF THE HUMAN

If a man is of a mind to believe, he will need no external authority to tell him that he must believe. If he "willeth to do God's will," he will be aware of the intrinsic authority of a message from God. God spoke and a human prophet divinely inspired listened. He thought, he spoke, he wrote. He was unable to keep the divine force out of his speaking and writing. He could only say, "This is the word of the Lord." But neither could he eliminate his own personality, and to that extent we have also the word of man.

Even the "ultra fundamentalists" among us who hold that every word written in the Bible is a direct revelation from God do not choose to follow this conclusion in any practical way. There are many things that they choose to ignore in this 'big Book' when it comes to making applications to their beliefs and theories. They hold the doctrines often times on grounds of protecting some cherished beliefs about the Bible, rather than those beliefs explicitly taught by the Bible. The Bible as a record of God's progressive revelation and each scripture as a unit in the process toward final revelation is ignored. The Bible becomes a "word book" instead of a "Word of Life." The significant fact is that because of the prophetic records

exists something greater and deeper than people can fully describe: it is a vital, living connection between Jehovah and his people that makes possible the unique relation which finds expression in the remarkable history of the race and in the experiences and souls of its spiritual leaders. Thus through life....God reveals himself to the life of humanity....

....Not on skins and papyrus rolls, but in the life of the Israelitish race and on the minds and consciences of enlightened men, God wrote his revelation. History and the character and consciousness of the human race are its imperishable records.

Inspired though they were, the prophets were yet men, writing with definite conditions and individuals in mind, well aware

the needs of a rapidly changing community and varied and wearing experiences which were trying men's souls. That which gave courage to the conquered and resolution to the oppressed was not bare metaphysical speculation as to the divine nature, or a presentation of a system of doctrine, but the living awareness of a God over history who can reveal his will pari passu with man's capacity to appreciate and assimilate the truths revealed.³

At each step of the historical development, from the nomadic wanderings of the experiences of a developing nation and the birth of a church, men were called out to proclaim the corresponding spiritual truths who were enabled to grasp the unfolding of the divine counsel. Such men were not more concerned with the future than with the present, nor were they out of touch with events, but their words were intelligible to their immediate hearers. That which would encourage and strengthen would be the revelation of God's will for the present in the light of a divine scheme, which scheme, being divine, could not be limited entirely to the present and therefore would include a secondary predictive element.

PROPHECY VS. "VERBAL DICTATION"

It will help us to observe the practical and unilateralistic interpretations of Jesus and the New Testament writers. Their search was for the living truths to which all writers of the Bible were so passionately dedicated. The idea of inspiration never ruled out for them the co-existence of ordinary human imperfections. The inspired writers of the New Testament did not regard themselves as free from human weaknesses, and differed from each other in matters of minor importance. These did not cause them to reflect on their "unreliability," for the inspiration was never thought of by them as constant. The Enoch who walks with God must also walk with man or he will leave no message!

According to the common and acceptable practice of interpretation in Paul's day, all Scripture, on one respect, was so regarded.

According to the common and acceptable practice of interpretation in Paul's day, all Scripture, in one respect, was so regarded as inspired that the human writer could be left out of account all together and his words quoted as the words of God. On the other hand, they did not so discount the human element as to consider these the literal words of God. Had they done this, the New Testament writers would not have been so free in their unilateralistic quotations and applications.

A.P. Strong has this to say:

Every imperfection NOT inconsistent with truth in a human composition may exist in inspired Scripture. The Bible is God's word, in the sense that it presents to us divine truth in

human forms, and is a revelation not for a select class but for the common mind. Rightly understood, this very humanity of the Bible is a proof of it's divinity.⁶

PROPHECY VS. PREDICTION

We must not look at the prophet as a musical instrument nor as a mere pen in the hand of another, nor at his message as a pre-announcement of events or a chart of dates--.

... a kind of glorified "Old Moore's Almanac", plotting out the future in cryptograms. Ingenious persons devote time and trouble, which they might well have spent on cross-word puzzles, to the attempt to discover the "key to prophecy", just as others try to predict coming events from the measurements of the Great Pyramid.

We get the idea from some writers and theologians that when the prophets speak of God as putting His words in their mouths, he just popped them in, one by one, to be popped out again when God pressed the button. And what is to keep them from speaking when the button is not pressed? Whole systems of doctrine have been based on a simple figure in the Bible which is made to mean something the writer never intended. "It is nothing short of a sin against light and knowledge," wrote F.W. Farrar, "to stereotype, out of the pretence of reverence, the errors of men who, in the course of ecclesiastical history,

... were not more illuminated by God's Spirit than we may be, and who in knowledge were hundreds of years behind ourselves. Lactantius, on the authority of Scripture, denied that the earth was round; and Augustine that there could be men at the antipodes; and the Spanish theologians that there could be a western hemisphere. "Who", asks Calvin, "will venture to place the authority of Copernicus above that of the Holy Spirit?" "Newton's discoveries," said the Puritan John Owen, "are against evident testimonies of Scripture."⁶

... Wild fanaticism, dark superstition, abject bondage, antinomian license, the burning hatred and unbending obstinacy of party spirit--have they not each in turn perverted the Scriptures to which they appealed?... Thousands of poor harmless women... were burnt to death... as witches, on the supposed authority of a text in Leviticus. A crime so atrocious as the massacre of St. Bartholomew was hailed by Pope Gregory XIII with acclamation, and paralleled by the zeal for God of ancient heroes. Texts are used to crush... liberty, and to buttress the tyrannies.... Even the Spanish Inquisition--that infamy of Christendom--appealed to Scriptural warrant for the right to immolate its holocausts of victims.⁷

There is unanimous conviction on the part of Biblical students that the word for prophet or prophecy has to do with "forth-telling" rather than with "foretelling." This does not deny that there is within prophecy some foretelling, but the chief work of the prophet was to preach, not to predict.

God's sovereignty over history may be recognized without trying to prove from the Bible a theory that demands that at the course of all history be fixed unchangeably beforehand. If this were the case, any apparent influence of human choice would only be an illusion. The prophets were aware of two elements, one constant, the other variable: the purpose of God on the one hand and human action on the other. Their prophecies or anticipations were thus conditioned.

C. H. Dodd holds that "the true intention of prophetic predictions is not to unveil an inevitable future, but to alter the variable element in the present situation--the action of men--in relation to the constant element--the will of God--and so alter the resultant situation."⁸

The prophet found himself within a divine revelatory system that made man a morally responsible being,⁹ and he learned the meaning of the present situation by discerning what God was saying to him within it. Within this system Jeremiah felt that he could grow in his concept of "the servant" and "the Anointed." "Man's reach exceeds his grasp, else what's heaven for?" God enabled the prophets to reach high and far, but their grasp was limited, their vision was often broken and fractional. The tremendous vision of Isaiah is now and then limited by a narrow nationalism. The great insight of Jeremiah into the universal reign of God is confined at times to the geography of Jerusalem. Job gets a momentary glimpse of life beyond the veil and then seems to return to an earthbound wrangling with his friends. Paul could be caught up to the third heaven and then find that human limitations made it impossible to describe his experience to men. But the prophet has seen things as they ought to be and is pained to see things as they are. He has the faith and the inspiration to know that things can not remain as they are: there is Judgment and there is Restoration. This is in the providence of God and within his revelatory plan.

USING OUR RATIONAL CAPACITIES

We too must search for the living truths to which the Biblical writers were dedicated. This we must do with an open mind, with all the rational capacities that God has given us, and with sympathetic appreciation and a frank acknowledgment of a religious motivation.

Farrar quotes John Milton as having said that, if a man "believe things only because his pastor says so, or the assembly so determines, without knowing other reason, though his belief be true, yet the very truth he holds becomes his heresy." So, if one believes the Bible, believes in it for what it is, a work of divine wisdom, then he should have no fear, for it will stand every test of reason and learning. John said, "Do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are of God, (I John 4:1)." Paul urged, apparently

without fear, "Test everything (I Thess 5:21)," for he recognized that the judgment of God is according to truth (I Cor 13:6)." Jesus asked: "Why do you not judge yourselves what is right? (Luke 12:57)" We observe no timid, passive, servile attitude here, no spirit of fear but signs of a sound mind.

Nevertheless, the task of the interpreter is a difficult one, and he is foolish who does not recognize the value of taking advantage of specialists in the many fields bearing on the interpretation of the Bible, i.e., language, history, geography, anthropology, etc. The dependable expositor must possess a ready and consistent honesty in the face of A PRIORI conviction. He too must cast aside fear and timidity. He must not confuse revealed facts with theological notions, nor permit long-tolerated though untenable errors to put on the air of abstract truth. Rare insight and knowledge are needed, as well as the rare gift of real sympathy.

Faith must not fear reason, for faith and reason are not contrary, they are not opposed to each other, and faith is not to be maintained in spite of reason. God has created us as rational beings as well as with a capacity for faith. If a man's mind is to be won, it can not be apart from his thoughts. Interpretations of the Scriptures are not to be accepted without argument upon Orthodoxy's IPSE DIXIT, but because they can make the prophetic message live again on the historical scene in which they at first were participants.

If we are to use the methods of historical scholarship in our interpretation of prophecy, we need to recognize that the element of error can be present here in spite of "scientific approach." One of the grossest of errors that has been made by historical scholars is that of presupposition which limits God's revelation, leaving room for any outstanding spiritual streak of genius, not to mention a revelation which is thrust upon man by the Divine.

Such critics often force the prophets into their writings into certain preconceived categories, which eliminates freedom and originality. It is true that the prophet may be looked upon as one influenced by God as one who is often lifted above his environment. He is more than a mere creator of environment or he would have been a Baalist rather than a prophet of Jehovah. Instead of being a victim of his environment, he conquered it. More than a mere interpreter of history, he was a maker of history!

To limit the prophet's interest entirely to his immediate hearers is another error often made by historical critics. It is to go to the other extreme of taking the prophet entirely out of his milieu. As a man of God, with an inspired message and vision he could not be bound entirely to the present. In looking for the distinction between

present and future, human and divine, permanent and temporal, the interpreter must take the greatest care, for drawing the line of demarcation is a difficult exegetical problem.

INTERPRETATION IN THE SPIRIT OF ALEXANDER CAMPBELL

The sects of Christianity have tended to cloud the issue and to put a blanket anathema upon any scientific trend in interpretation, without realizing that many of their greatest leaders that they now pretend to follow would have led them elsewhere. This may also be seen to be true of those who claim in their heritage such leaders as Alexander Campbell, J.S. Lamar, Et. Al. About the confusion of religious leaders of his own day, due to a lack of any kind systematic or scientific interpretation, Campbell had this to say: "the Saints are still in Babylon," and "more than half the language of Ashdod is mingled with less than half the language of Canaan."¹¹ He recognized the common modern distortions of the Scriptures and attempted to discourage ambiguous and unscientific methods of interpretation.¹² He did not hesitate to point out the human side of the divine word:

It may be observed that we find many things in these writings which are quite natural and common, for which inspiration is neither claimed or pretended....

God has spoken by men, to men, for men. The language of the Bible is, then, human language.¹³

In the same place Campbell calls attention to the need for scientific interpretation due to the different "dialects, idioms, manners, customs, and all the varieties which the everchanging conditions of society have originated and are still originating."

Our puerile and stagnant "scholarship" today would do well to try to understand the mind of Alexander Campbell. If he were to appear in some of our pulpits, periodicals and seminaries today, I fear that he would be disowned. The Restoration Movement began with men of real scholarship, but it has been dying because it has been fed on insipid bantering about terms and platitudes and personalities. But there is reason to be encouraged. Many brilliant men within the Restoration Movement are beginning to speak and write as they should.

FOOTNOTES

¹Otto J. Baab, "The Theology of the Old Testament" New York: Abingdon Cokesbury Press, 1949, p. 54.

²C.F. Kent, "The Origin and Permanent Value of the Old Testament" Boston: The Pilgrim Press, 1906, pp. 22f.

³Cf. E.A. Edghill, "Evidential Value of Prophecy" London: Macmillan and Company, 1906, p. 3.

⁴A.P. Strong, "Outlines of Systematic Theology" Philadelphia: The Griffith and Rowland Press, 1908, p. 59.

⁵C.H. Dodd, "The Bible Today" New York: The Macmillan Company, 1947, p. 130.

⁶F.W. Farrar, "History of Interpretation" New York: E.P. Dutton and Company, 1886, p. 131.

⁷Ibid., pp. 39 f.

⁸C.H. Dodd, OP. CIT., p. 131.

⁹See Deuteronomy 30:15, 19.

¹⁰Cp. Jeremiah 3:6-13, 10-25; 4:1f.; 31:6; 36; 15:10-21.

¹¹R.F. West, "Alexander Campbell and Natural Religion" New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948, p. 31.

¹²A. Campbell, "The Bible," "The Millennial Harbinger", 1845, pp. 433f., and 1846, pp. 13f. Cf. "The Pentateuch," 1862, pp. 318f.

¹³Ibid., "Principles of Interpretation" 1846, pp. 13ff.

REASON AND REVELATION

George Alder

"In his *Treatise On The Gods*, Mencken says of the Christians: 'It is their fate to live absurdly, flogged by categorical imperatives of their own shallow imaginings, and to die insanelly, grasping for hands that are not there.'" ¹ This kind of criticism has driven many to the extreme of saying, in effect, faith is a gift; it comes to man from God without benefit of any effort on man's part-----we cannot help believing what we believe. Others, taking the opposite extreme, have labored to prove everything. To them Christian Evidences, scientific proof, etc. have been used to bolster faith and to give them good courage to say, "We believe what we can prove."

Although the majority of people do not follow these extremes, these positions serve to illustrate the problem of the balance and inter-relationship of reason and revelation. This topic is tremendous in its implications. Somehow at the outset of our discussion of this theme we must limit the scope of the discussion in order to make any sensible progress in a short space with such a pregnant theme. We eliminate some problems quickly by assuming: the existence of God; the freedom of man's will; and the fact of revelation.

In this you see that we are assuming that man is the subject of some attempt on the part of God at communication. It being true that "no man hath seen God at any time", ² and that God does not seem to be conversing with us in any self-evident way we are faced with the problem of determining what revelation is, and how it is discerned. This is basically the problem of Reason and Revelation. We shall proceed to investigate this problem by discussing reason, revelation, and the relationship of reason and revelation.

The Greeks thought that man differed from animals in reasoning ability. Modern anthropologists claim that tool making and language are the abilities which give man a peculiar excellence. The Hebrew-Christian interpretation would be that man's distinctness is in his ability to be moral. In each case, however, the power to reason is inherent. Men reason and make tools to do things which otherwise could not be done. Language seems to be the result of the result of the reasoning process, and, obviously, the only moral creatures are those who can reason and make choices.

Just what is the power to reason? It is the ability to measure and evaluate experi-

ences and information. It is the power to adjust to and to adjust circumstances. Naturally this ability in every person is constantly undergoing change as new experiences are realized and additional information received and catalogued in the mind.

"A group of people waiting to be interviewed by a psychologist to answer the question 'What were you thinking about when the clock struck just now?' Among the answers received were these:

1. 'I was wondering whether I would get the job.'
2. 'I was trying to remember what book I had to buy for the course.'
3. 'I was trying to decide whether it was worth waiting any longer.'
4. 'I really can't say --- I suppose just wool-gathering.'
5. 'My young brother asked me this morning how a heavy airplane could float in air - I was trying to figure out the answer.'

All of these people were thinking after a fashion, but only the last was reasoning." ³

Urban, using another word, says that "Logic is the science of reflective thinking."

The accomplishments of the power of reason are tremendous. The advancing material welfare of people is the result of this ability. The spiritual and moral welfare of men is also dependent upon this power, for, as we shall see later, reason is the receptor of revelation. Sometime it is obvious that we are progressing as the result of reflective thought; at other times it seems that we have come to a dead-end street. Ages of so-called reason are often periods of moral morasses.

Ideally reason should be guiding us to better life through a better understanding of reality. Actually, however, the actions of men have led to some strange conclusions as to man's origin and destiny. Some have believed man lower than animals. The Greek cynics who derived their name from the word *kynos* (dog) thought man worse than an animal. Certainly man can be worse than an animal, for a debased reasoning power makes possible a depth of immorality which no animal could ever conceive. The fact that man has a power of corruption is proof that he has also a power of incorruption or godliness.

Others have equated man with animals. These think him no lower or higher than the whole class of animals. Man, to them, occupies a peculiar position, but not beyond any right of superior morality or any divine gifts.

Others have seen man as "little lower than the angels." Certainly his artist

achievements, His cultured attainments, is scientific ingenuity, and his religious interests would indicate that his position is unique. This view sees man as of special interest to the Creator; his life has been given from God.

"Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting;
The Soul that rises with us, our Life's Star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting
And cometh from afar;
Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, who is our home:" 5.

Even though man occupies this distinct and wonderful position and maintains this position through the power of reason, we see that reason alone has not been sufficient to lead the race to the truly happy life. James Stewart comments on the pessimism resulting from reason's inability to make us perfect:

The light of reason itself is treacherous and perfidious. He that would frame dogmas, let him abjure the aid of logic. He that glorieth in him glory in his irrationalism! It is hard to believe that this position, supported though it is by great and honored names, can maintain itself indefinitely. God intends his pilgrims to struggle through the Slough of Despond, not make it their theological home." 6.

We must avoid this Charybdis of pessimism, and, equally so, the Scylla of optimism which would lead us to blaspheme "I am the master of my fate, I am the captain of my soul". 7. A good motto could be derived from the Greeks' *maden agan*, nothing too much. Reason isolated from revelation is accomplishments, but the records of these accomplishments is a gloomy historical account of rising and falling civilizations. Francis Bacon said, "A little philosophy inclineth man's mind to atheism; depth in philosophy bringeth man's mind about to religion".

The Lord has said, "My thoughts are not your thoughts". 8. i.e. man unaided by God could never think properly the thoughts of God. How then will God make himself known to men? Revelation, *apokalupsis*, means to disclose, to uncover. Revelation is God's deliberate act to make known to man things which by reason alone would never be discoverable. Basically these matters are the nature of God, the nature of man, and the nature of their relationship with each other. Reasons alone has applied a tremendous variety of ideas on these subjects. As formerly suggested, there have been those who have seen man lower than animals, equal with animals, and superior to animals. Likewise God has been conceived of as a tyrant, as an immoral, many married husband, a blood-thirsty fiend, a multitude of busy agents, etc. And the relationship of man and God has suffered no less variety of ideas at the hands of untutored reason.

We reason from the known to the unknown. Without some revelation from God we could never reason accurately concerning God, for we would have no known elements upon which to build an accurate structure in the mind. The coming of Christ into the world as the logos, the word, is the most amazing of all events in history. In this act God came in the presence of Christ that He would be revealed, "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten from the father, He hath declared Him". 9. The life of Christ as the Revelator has changed the whole situation. Man's semantic environment has now been conditioned so that man can acquire facts upon which to build sound conclusions concerning the three important questions of God's nature, man's nature, and their relationship. God's nature is made plain in Christ for Jesus said "He that hath seen me hath seen the father". 10. Man's nature is shown to be eternal, and of importance for "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself". 11.

Of course there has always been evidence that God is, but the great question of what He is is unanswered without Christ. True, "The Heavens declare the glory of

God, and the firmament sheweth His handiwork", 12, but the heavens do not tell us what God is like. When the great storms come and the heavens are frowning, men have thought that God hated men. When the sun shines and the warm rains fall and the flowers bloom, men have thought Him a God of Love. Man unaided by revelation could never reason properly concerning God.

Certainly God has revealed Himself to man in Christ, and that revelation has to be given to us by some means. Language has been used for this purpose. Words as the conveyors of thoughts have carried to our minds the revelation of God. Reason, then, becomes the receptor of the revelation. We must be careful not to hold reason in disdain, for then we may think to trust in some mystical direct communication:

"The things unknown to feeble sense
Un seen by reason's glimmering ray,
With strong commanding evidence
Their heavenly origin display." 13

But to what can this evidence come, but to the mind and its power to reason?

Reason, then, is the key to the acceptance of revelation, and revelation is the doorway through which reason may learn.

The Scriptural appeal to reason, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith Jehovah: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow....". 14. And we see that God has been consistent in His attempt to enter man's life through the appeal to reason, "For seeing that in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom knew not God, it was God's good

pleasure through the foolishness of the preaching to save them that believe", 15. And Paul argues "how can they believe unless they hear?", 16.

Reason carries a very heavy burden for it is this power of reflective thinking upon which man must depend to determine what is revelation. The admonition, "Test the spirits", 17, certainly means that we must make judgement between truth and falsehood and this judgement is the exercise of the enlightened mind. The determination of what shall be accepted as Scripture, i.e. what is the canon, is dependent upon reason.

Having concluded that certain writings are revelation, reason is faced with the problem of what the revelation means. Here we have the problem of interpreting symbols. Just as the translator must try to equate expressions in several languages, so the student of revelation must try to equate expressions with realities. He must attempt to understand what is signified. The preacher as an interpreter is constantly striving to make clear the application of what God has revealed. He cannot be unaware that his task is fraught with some rather formidable difficulties. Not the least among his problems is the determination of the authentic meaning of terms. He must discover what concept the writer was conveying when he wrote. The fact that the whole social and religious environment may have been different must be considered. And akin to this problem of determining authentic meanings is the problem of application of revelation. This involves the relationships of the covenants, the fulfillment of prophecy, and the determination of whether passages of scripture are timely or timeless in their applications.

As quickly as we recognize that there are inherent problems with which reason must grapple in interpreting revelation we are tempted to circumnavigate these problems. The desire to be sure of all things, the quest for absolutism, leads to the development of priestly cults who claim that they alone can adequately interpret the word. The movement to restore the primitive church has not been free from this school of thought. This legalism is often referred to as "taking a stand", and its devotees seem singularly incapable of realizing that all religious positions must be subject to examination if we are to make progress in understanding revelation. The essence of Romanism is this absolutism which requires the ministries of the pope, cardinals, etc. down to the parish priest to keep the unenlightened properly directed.

Another expression of this insecurity in the presence of revelation is the tremendous emphasis is upon doctrines. If we do not depend on priests to tell us what true doctrine is we may find ourselves building up a system of doctrines with proof text

added to proof text so that we may become secure in our fortress of logic. There is much to commend this practice when followed with some degree of temperance but often its devotees are the worshippers of a system of doctrines and not worshippers of the Christ to whom these doctrines lead. And it is also extremely easy to fall into the dangerous habit of doctrine supporting with texts to the extent that all the rules of exegesis are neglected and we are victimized by the tendency "to seek our tenants where inspiration never placed them".

The fear of priestly cultism on the one hand and of untempered doctrinalism on the other has led many to a desire to know Jesus "spiritually". This is another escape route from the practical application of reason to revelation. Just as the priestly cults escape the effect of reasoning by having certain divinely appointed interpreters, and the doctrinalists escape it by the vociferous claim that there isn't a problem at all; the spiritualists say that God will reveal the Christ directly to the individual without benefit or hindrance of Scripture. Of course, this position is a fanciful piece of imagination, for apart from the Bible what we could know of Jesus would be a little even to give the spiritualist a grist for his mental mill. And, of course, if God wanted this kind of a program for knowing Jesus he would never have needed to give us a Bible anyway.

We see, then, that there isn't any escape from the fact that God has sent His revelation to us and that he expects us to reason upon it. We never men have been willing to accept His word as a revelation and have made a direct, studious, and reverent application of mind to it they have never been disappointed. Western civilization itself is a result of what that revelation can do for people who even partially appreciate its meaning. Certainly the concept of the unity of nature as the result of the act of a creator has led to the development of science. Apart from the recognition of a pattern in nature there would be no hope for any constructive work in using nature to the aid of mankind.

Since God has given His Son that "who soever believeth may not perish" it is apparent that God is appealing to every mind. Revelation is a God given gift, and we must recognize that the power to reason is also God given. These two gifts are admirably suited to each other. A happy cooperation of the two leads to understanding.

Thomas Campbell recognized that the revelation of Christ through the Scripture is plain enough, but he also was aware that men would get into trouble if they attempted to get uniformity in thinking on a subjects. This principle he set forth in cooperation with the brethren:

"That although inferences and deductions from Scripture premises, when fairly inferred, may

be truly called the doctrine of God's holy word, yet are they not formerly binding upon the consciences of Christians farther than they perceive the connection, and evidently see that they are so; for their faith must not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power and veracity of God. Therefore, no such deductions can be made terms of communion, but do properly belong to the after and progressive edification of the church. Hence, it is evident that no such deduction or inferential truths ought to have any place in the church's confession." 18

The moment we attempt to use our own minds in understanding the Word of God, we are obligated to recognize that other persons have the same right to read and study and seek knowledge of the Lord. There are many who appear fearful that the results of this freedom will be disastrous and they attempt to rectify what seems to them a mistake on God's part by becoming authoritarians who insist that others must hear them.

It is evident that erroneous thinking will lead to errors in religion, but God has provided no check upon this except the revealed word. If He has been willing to trust that the reasoning power of man can understand the word and that the preaching of the Gospel can convert men, we certainly must be willing to trust that this is so. Perhaps if proclaimers of the Gospel would be more simple and plain in preaching and would leave off exaggerations concerning the difficulties in Scripture the hearers would be encouraged to read the word for what it is --- a revelation of God to man. They would not see it as a mysterious book of magic, proof-texts, difficult dogmas, etc. All these concepts have been reared by preachers and teachers who have walked in darkness rather than in the light.

Today we have need for vital preaching of Christ. Paul, having studied the philosophies of his day, said "I am determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified", 19. Now we need that emphasis on Him. We need to see that the whole revelation of God to man is summed up in Him for "in Him are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden". Reason properly applied to this grand revelation will lead to faith. Reason separate from revelation can never reach God. And revelation apart from reason can never reach man. We must have a proper respect for both reason and revelation. The person who fears revelation can never know God's truth. And he who fears reason likewise can never know God's truth. For "he who destroys reason to make room for revelation in the end destroys both". 20.

4. Urban, "Language and Reality", p. 2.
5. Wordsworth, "Ode On Intimations Of Immortality".
6. Stewart, "Heralds Of God", p. 19-20.
7. Henley, "Invictus".
8. Isaiah 55:8.
9. John 1:18.
10. John 14:9.
11. II Corinthians 5:19.
12. Psalms 19:1.
13. John Wesley.
14. Isaiah 1:18.
15. I Corinthians 1:21.
16. Romans 10:14.
17. I John 4:1.
18. Thomas Campbell.
19. I Corinthians 2:2.
20. John Locke.

FOOTNOTES

1. Robert Payne, "The Fathers Of The Western Church", p. 7.
2. John 1:18.
3. Black, "Critical Thinking", p. 3.

THE REVIVAL OF BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

Charles Gresham

In 1935 Harry Emerson Fosdick preached a sermon entitled, "A Fundamentalist Sermon by a Modernist Preacher". At the conclusion of the sermon is a frank confession, expressive of the vacuum left by a denial of the significance of Biblical religion by Modernism. Fosdick said, "We modernists have often gotten at our faith by a negative process. We do not believe this. We donot believe that. We have given up this indredible idea or that obsolete doctrine. So we pare down and dim out our faith by negative abstractions until we have left only a ghostly remainder of what was once a great religion. Then seeing how few our positive convictions are and how little they matter, we grow easy-going about everybody else's convictions, and end in a mush of general concession. Then a crisis falls upon the individual soul, upon the family, upon the world at large, where a religion that is going to amount to anything must have deep conviction in it. 'The rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not; for it was founded upon the rock' --- how much we need that!"¹

"Then a crisis falls" --- and it has fallen upon all the world. Wars, catastrophe, famine and calamities of every kind have befallen the residents of the world in this twentieth century. Liberalism, as a theology, failed to prove itself in the crisis period and there has come a definite trend away from the easy-going, complacency of liberalism, with its *religionsgeschichte* (history of religion) idea of the Bible with a corresponding drift toward a more firm, Biblical theology in which the Revelation of God in history becomes really significant. It is with this background of significant events and trends that we dis-

cuss the revival of Biblical Interpretation.

Biblical Interpretation or Sacred Hermeneutics, during this "golden age" of liberalism and radical Biblical criticism, was quite unpopular and, in effect, died as far as being a valid theological discipline was concerned. This was due to the prevailing viewpoint of critics toward the Bible. The Bible was generally considered a search of a people for God and was not considered particularly normative nor authoritative. Therefore, no necessity for interpreting these literary documents was felt. Ralph Earle points out three trends during this period:² (1) In the Biblical field theology was replaced by criticism; (2) Synthetic study of the Bible was replaced by Analysis; and (3) The infallible theory of evolution was applied wholesale to the study of Biblical religion.

But things are different now! The return to a Biblical theology has caused a corresponding return to Biblical Hermeneutics. As an example of this one could note the

As an example of this, one could note the beginning of a new journal in 1947 devoted to Biblical Interpretation. It is called "Interpretation-A Journal of Bible and Theology" and is published in Richmond Virginia. "The first article in "Interpretation" was a happy choice. Dr. H. H. Rowley, of Manchester, England, has reflected the purpose and plan of the journal in his article entitled, 'The Relevance of Biblical Interpretation'. His opening sentence reads: 'The appearance of a journal specifically devoted to biblical interpretation is a symptom of our time'."³ There are many other examples and instances illustrative of this revival which we could cite, but let this summary quotation from Professor Charles T. Fritsch of Princeton Theological Seminary suffice: "It is hear-

ening to see that scholars are again concerned with the message of the Bible or Biblical religion, and not just about its background.⁴

It is out of this deep-felt concern regarding the message of the Bible that constructive efforts have been made toward reviving Biblical Interpretation as a significant element in the life of the Church. The dearth of material of first-class scholarship in this area is appalling. Dr. Wilbur Smith, who is as conversant as any living man with the published religious works of this century, says: "Probably in no department of Biblical and theological study has there been such a lack of worthwhile literature in the twentieth century as in the field of Biblical hermeneutics."⁵

However, glimmers of hope appear on the horizon. The work by Ramm entitled "Protestant Biblical Interpretation" is an example of encouraging news from a literary standpoint. Other works such as Dana's "Searching the Scriptures" (Central Seminary Press), Berkhof's "Principles of Biblical Interpretation" (Baker) and Stibbs' "Understanding God's Word" (Inter-Varsity) are welcome additions to this growing hermeneutical literature. Reprints of nineteenth-century classics such as Terry's "Biblical Hermeneutics" will be of immeasurable worth. Volumes such as Grant's "The Bible in The Church" will add to our understanding by tracing the history of Interpretation through the Ages. Certainly, in light of these literary works, one can see that there is indeed a Revival of Biblical Interpretation.

Not only is this revival seen in literary publication but it is also witnessed to in the Curricula of the various Bible Colleges and Seminaries devoted to training of the ministers of the Church. One need only peruse catalogs or make brief inquiry to ascertain this. There is a great realization on the part of religious educators that an understanding of God's word is essential to the on-going and growth of the

Church of Christ; and that the only way in which that word can be known in all its truth and purity is through a proper application of the science of Biblical Interpretation to its basic, God-breathed, revelational message.

We, of the Restoration Movement, ought to rejoice greatly in this revival of Biblical Hermeneutics as this has been our basic concern from the beginning. "Let us then, who delight in the whole counsel of God, adorn it with the labor of souls and bodies which bear marks of grace. In our day, names revered in science and philosophy, as well as in theology, warn us that the world hovers at the brink of chaos. Whether it be so or not on the plane of history, it is so ideologically, and must remain so, until mankind recovers that word which lifted the West out of paganism and set men's enslaved spirits free."⁶ And let us become members of the "elect and honorable and enviable class of men that we call students of New Testament exegesis...the happiest and most enviable of all men who have been set apart to nothing else but to the understanding and the opening up of the hidden treasures of God's Word and God's Son".⁷

1. Quoted by T. W. Isherwood; "Trends of Recent Theological Thought", Scottish Journal of Theology, Vol. 3, No. 3, (September, 1950).

2. "The Revival of Biblical Theology", The Asbury Seminarian, Vol. 2, No. 2, (Summer, 1947).

3. Loc. Cit.

4. "Biblical Typology", Bibliotheca Sacra, Vol. 103, No. 411.

5. Preface, Ramm: Protestant Biblical Interpretation (Boston: W. A. Wilde Co., 1950) p. xi.

6. Henry: Fifty Years of Protestant Theology (Boston: W. A. Wilde Co., 1950), p. 104.

7. A. Whyte: The Walk and Conversation and Character of Jesus Christ Our Lord, p. 53 quoted by Smith in preface of Ramm: Op. Cit., p. xiii.

BASIC PRINCIPLES OF HERMENEUTICS

Seth Wilson

INTRODUCTION: THE PROPER FUNCTION OF HUMAN INTELLIGENCE IN RECEIVING AND USING A DIVINE REVELATION

When God Speaks, how should man listen? If a book claims to be an inspired revelation from God--the very words of Him who cannot lie or be deceived--what is the correct and appropriate use of reason in dealing with it?

First: We must use reason and intelligence to decide whether it is from God. If God presents to us a message to be regarded as having absolute authority, to enlighten and to rule our lives, He obviously appeals to our judgement to discriminate between this and other messages. In fact, both in the Bible and in the manner of its origin God gives us reasonable evidences and testimonies that enable men to decide intelligently concerning its authenticity. The basis of our faith in the Bible is not a matter of proving all Bible statements to be true, but a matter of recognizing the divine minds from which they come. Miracles, prophecies, claims, scope, unity amid diversity, candor of judgment and unique character of the Bible all plainly indicate that it is from God and not from man unaided. We need to study more and to preach more of these sure foundations of the faith. We need to produce in our hearers the conviction that the Bible is indeed a message from God; hence its precepts are binding, its histories are true, its judgments are inexorable, and its doctrines are powerful to transform the hearts and lives of men.

Second: We must use our intelligence to understand what God said.

It is certainly reasonable, as well as respectful toward God, for us to make every

effort to determine what His words were intended to signify. God has spoken to the minds of men in the language of men calling upon men to hear and to heed the plain import of His words. His word is given to unbelievers to bring them to faith¹, and to believers to direct their obedience and "to build (them) up and give (them) the inheritance among all them that are sanctified."² All men owe it to God and owe it to themselves to understand and to use God's word as He intended.

Third: We must accept it and follow it with all confidence and submission. When God reveals, by special enlightenment through His Spirit, things which eye has not seen, ear has not heard, which never entered into the heart of men³, it is folly and irreverence to try to prove whether God told the truth. It is unreasonable to expect the scope of human experience and reason to provide the proof of things reaching to far beyond both reason and experience. No method of science or of philosophy can prove some statements which are of central importance in the Bible: e.g. that the death of Christ atones for my sin⁴; or that Jesus will come again and receive us unto Himself⁵; or that the baptism of a penitent believer in Christ secures the forgiveness of the believer's sins⁶.

These and others must be accepted upon the authority or reliability of the One who says it is so. It would be thoroughly irreverent and unbelieving for us to question the truth of the message after we have assurance that it is from God. The demand that all Bible statements must be discovered by scientific method, proved by rational processes, or confirmed by results in practice, before they can be regarded as authoritative or established truth, is simply

demand that God must not be greater than man and must not reveal anything man could not find out for himself with his own close-limited, earth-bound senses. If a message is really from God we may be sure that it is unfailingly true in the sense that He meant it. It will give us knowledge that sends a shaft of light unto the dark, unknown future, and will show up most fully all times, life's highest possibilities and responsibilities. A revelation of authoritative and infallible truth gives us a degree and kind of certainty which could never be approached by the incomplete inductions and the fallacy-ridden experimentation of scientific methods. The fact that such a revelation has been made is established by the best combination of many independent evidences, both empirical and rational.

Our discussion here is concerned with the basic principles by which we can understand the divine message which we have in the Bible.

PRELIMINARY TRUTHS

Some first principles need to be stated and remembered which are evident enough scarcely to need defense, but which are too often disregarded in the practice of Bible interpretation."

1. The true interpretation is what the author intended to say. Interpreting the Bible is merely reading it so as to grasp fully and accurately what the author thought he expressed. The reason for his saying so, or all the implications of it, may not be understood; but if we by reading get as much thought from the author's mind as he intended to convey by his words, we have read well and have fulfilled the purpose of exegesis. Anything more is not interpretation of the text, but is exploration of the subject on our own. To go beyond this in exposition it is necessary to know (or to assume to know) more than the writer knew, at least more than he said at the time. This principle is applicable whether the author is human or divine, and even when both are involved and the concept of the

one is something less than the full meaning of the other. We cannot tell that God had any meaning or purpose beyond that in the mind of the human writer unless we have further revelation about it elsewhere, or unless perhaps the future course of events indicates that the statement had prophetic intent which its human author did not see.

2. God's word has one intended meaning, not many conflicting ones. If we understand the Bible we must understand it alike, except for difference in the degree of our conception. If there is much difference even in this we are not really understanding it.

3. God is able to say what He wants to say, and He knew to whom He was speaking. Surely we should assume that God gave a message that is meaningful and comprehensible. Therefore, men who know the language in which it is given and any facts presupposed to be familiar to the readers should expect to be able to understand it with the same abilities by which they ordinarily understand written messages.

4. The language of the Bible is the language of men, even when it is used to express divine truth; and it is to be interpreted by the same methods and principles as are appropriate for any other message of similar literary nature. God has addressed the human mind in its natural state, in its own language with its own terminology and rhetorical forms.

(I Cor. 2:14 and II Pet. 1:20 are often considered to teach something contrary to what we have just said; but a careful study of them in their contexts will show that they do not. I Cor. 2:14 is speaking of the need of inspiration by apostles in their receiving the divine word to deliver to others; it is not speaking of reading it after it has been delivered in written form. This view is shown by the context both before and after the verse, and it is in harmony with all the scriptures which call upon men, women, children, masters and slaves to

read the scriptures for themselves without any reference to special spiritual qualifications. In fact, it is the same message, whether spoken or written, which is the instrument of the Spirit in convicting the world and converting the carnal mind. Peter is also speaking of the origin of prophecies, of the writing, not the reading of them. His parallel expression in the next verse plainly shows this, and the Greek of verse 20 is best understood to mean: "No prophecy of scripture is of the prophet's own releasing (prompting, or impulse)."

Therefore, interpretation is not an esoteric art, known only to experts or mystics who have been initiated into its mysteries. In fact, the use of language of words to convey meaning and to receive ideas is one of the most universal of all human practices. The principles of hermeneutics have been in use since Adam and Eve first received the power of speech and listened to the voice of God and to each other. Correct methods and good practices in interpretation are natural to the human mind and are used by everyone when we really want to find just what someone was thinking and trying to communicate in a piece of writing, and when we do not have any desire to make it mean one thing more than another. We can and do understand if we have a knowledge of the language used and the information supposed to be known to the reader.

The Bible has been considered so different in authority and purpose that methods of interpretation have been devised for it which no one would ever use for understanding a plain message in human language. Such methods could not be expected to yield right results because they are not governed by and limited to the actual forms of language used to express the author's ideas; but they draw upon the imagination of the interpreter (or other outside source of ideas) to supply meanings that the author's words themselves do not clearly signify. On the other extreme, but for similar reasons, many people do not

expect to understand the Bible. They never undertake to read it as they ordinarily would any other book to find what it actually means. Their only contact with it is extremely irregular and unsystematic, limited mostly to picking a phrase here or a sentence there to use in any way that suits their fancy without any regard to its author's purpose, or any realization that each verse was actually intended to say one thing and nothing else.

5. When any Bible passage is used for any other meaning than what the author intended to express by it, it is not what the inspired writer had in mind; therefore such meaning read into it does not have the authority of scripture. It is the idea of a false interpreter instead of the idea of an inspired writer of truth. Such a use of any Bible passage is not only misrepresenting the most important body of truth in the world, but it is also stealing the words of divine prestige to convey the ideas of human scalawags who, knowingly or unknowingly, are guilty of GRAND LARCENY.

ORIGIN AND NATURE OF HERMENEUTICAL PRINCIPLES.

The rules and principles of the science of hermeneutics are not arbitrary laws decreed by popes or councils, enacted by congresses, or even invented by scholars. They are truly scientific in that they are descriptive, discovered, inductive, and without any authority except the accuracy with which they fit further experience. They are carefully stated descriptions of the way men regularly think and read when they get the meaning intended in any writing. They were not invented, but discovered by observation of many experiences and derived from analysis of many instances until a general statement could be made of what was regularly or always observed in cases of correct interpretation. A rule or principle comes into being in the attention to express what is found uniformly in some phase of the thinking habits and reading experiences of normal people. They are

cepted widely, not because of any authority from which they come, but because they appeal to the common sense and fit the experiences of most people. When many rules, descriptive of many particular factors of successful reading, are analytically compared and related to each other, the science of hermeneutics arises out of the compilation of them into an orderly whole.

One can interpret well without formal study of any set of rules, but cannot interpret accurately at all without following (perhaps unconsciously) these principles which are based upon the nature of the mind and of truth, and are inherent in the very structure and function of language. When the effect of emotional bias, or the influence of bad examples, or the fog of superstition, or other circumstance interferes with our normal thought processes or hinders our usual intellectual honesty, then we need to consider what principles and methods have been universally found to lead to true interpretations, that we may be guided by them back to sanity.

Sometimes rules are made and urged by grinders with the intent to support certain doctrines or doubtful kinds of exegesis; therefore all rules should be logically analyzed and tested by use in matter as free from bias as possible. Such rules, of course, have no authority. No one is bound to accept any rule of hermeneutics unless it is found to be true to facts and productive of correct results. Always remember that no result of reading is correct except discovery of exactly the thought the author intended to express.

Some may think as follows: If all people naturally practice interpretation with fair success much of the time, why do we need to be concerned with teaching and studying biblical Hermeneutic? Others will say: true interpretation is so accessible to all readers, then why do we have so many different ideas of what the Bible teaches? The second question helps answer the first; and both questions need some of the same answers. It is unpleasant to say it,

but it seems obviously true, that people are not as sensible and honest in reading the Bible as in other matters. Our minds are not as free from preconceptions and desire as to what it must mean. Reading any other book we are more ready to let it say anything it wants to say. Moreover, a great many express opinions about Bible teaching when they have heard, or decide in their own minds what ought to be true. Too often even teachers and preachers are uninformed and misinformed about what the Bible says, about the meaning of Bible words, about important related historical facts. They follow and depend upon false authorities or faulty sources of information. They are swayed by bias, or bound by tradition.

For better Bible interpretation we do not need to make new rules of language or new ways of thinking (That very thing has caused much of the present confusion of misinterpretations.), but we need to apply the intelligence God gave us according to the old universal principles of all language and thought. We need to become thoroughly acquainted with the facts of the language and historical circumstances which were familiar to those to whom it was originally written, so that its words will bring to our minds the ideas they were intended to suggest to the original readers.

SUMMARY OF PRINCIPLES

The general principles of right interpretation can be summarized here under five headings: words, grammar, context, historical circumstances, and harmony of all truth.

FIRST, WE MUST RECOGNIZE THE MEANING OF THE WORDS. Words are the basic symbols of ideas. A word is accepted by a group of people as the sign of some thought or experience which they have in common, and which they are able to suggest to one another by it. A word means whatever it is used to mean; and we must learn its meaning from its uses. It may be used for various meanings, by different people and in different areas or departments

of knowledge. A good reader needs a broad and accurate knowledge of words that he may recognize any of their meanings. For **this we need** most accurate and complete dictionaries, and must supplement them by continual observation of the various uses of Bible words. Investigation of word meaning must be made from the point of view of the author we are interpreting, giving attention to his special uses and to all uses nearest him in time, in territory and in subject matter. A writer's own explanation of his expressions is sufficient and final, and must not be departed from. Words of the writer's original expression in his own language are always surer evidence of his meaning than words of any translation; and etymologies of translation words must not be substituted for etymologies of those translated. Words in any language are likely to change in meaning and to depart considerably from etymology: i.e. from the import of words from which they were derived. Not only the kind of meaning, but also the extent of meaning or degree of force a word has is greatly affected by the connection it has with other words, by the purpose of the author at the time, and by the opposite which its user has in mind for it in each instance. Words may be used either literally (with their usual meaning) or figuratively (to designate something quite different from what they usually name, but suggesting some vivid association or comparison between the two). Figurative meaning, or any new meaning, should not be assumed by the reader if ordinary well-established meanings fit the passage being read.

SECOND: WE MUST INTERPRET THE GRAMMATICAL STRUCTURE OF THE SENTENCES.

Understanding grammar is an important part of interpreting the words in any sentence. Words are the bricks and boards of which a house of meaning is built; grammar is the design by which they are put together to make it a house instead of a

heap. What the author thinks about the things designated by his words is shown by the grammar he uses; also the way he feels about them. Even people who think they know no grammar do grasp the meaning of the most usual and simple grammatical constructions or they would not be able to read.

Most people who have studied a foreign language can remember instances of students' being able to give a meaning for every word in a sentence to be translated, yet being unable to translate it, to make meaning out of it. What was lacking was ability to perceive the relation of the words to each other and the meaning indicated by those relations: that is grammar or syntax. There is meaning in syntax that is not found in any single word. There is meaning, meaning that must be perceived by the reader, in every different voice, mood, tense, number, person of the verb, also in every other inflection of any part of speech. One who cannot see the construction and grasp its meaning cannot read what the author was thinking when he wrote it.

Anyone who has not had the experience of analyzing Bible sentences, and perhaps diagramming the analysis, ought to try it and see how it can clarify and determine definitely the interpretation.

THIRD: WE MUST READ IN THE LIGHT OF THE CONTEXT AND ABIDE BY ITS GUIDANCE

By means of careful attention to the paragraph, section, chapter, or book in which any expression occurs, we should: (1) perceive the subject of which the author is speaking and not apply his words to something far from his thought; (2) follow his course of thought or plan of presentation; (3) find his purpose for each word or phrase; (4) feel his own places and matters for emphasis, with the degree thereof; (5) see his mental or explicit antitheses so that the exact sense of his words is seen by the way they fit what he has in mind as the

posite of what he is saying. Of course, or the context to be used properly it must be determined of what it really consists. Some isolated passages, like many proverbs may not have any context on the same subject. Some contexts are quite limited, others are extended, even to the full length of a book, or related books by the same author. A helpful context may be remote from the focus of attention, especially in the case of intervening digressions. The full context will usually supply some of the facts to be discussed under the next heading.

FOURTH: WE MUST TAKE INTO ACCOUNT ALL REVELANT HISTORICAL CIRCUMSTANCES.

The meaning may be indicated, limited, or affected otherwise by any or all of the following particulars: Who wrote this? About what? In what form? To whom? When? Under what covenant? Under what personal circumstances? With what helps? For what purpose? What knowledge of the subject and of the readers did he have? What related facts did he suppose to be familiar to his readers?

Special questions of historical circumstances relate to ancient books like the Bible: viz. Have they come down to us unchanged, or has the text suffered some alteration or loss? Is it a translation of the original? Is it the most accurate and clear translation that can be made? In the interpretation of predictive prophecy the surest guide of all is to be found in the facts of the clearly identified fulfilment of the prediction.

FIFTH: WE MUST INTERPRET IN HARMONY WITH PARALLEL PASSAGES AND IN THE LIGHT OF ALL BIBLE TEACHING ON THE SAME SUBJECT.

Any true statement must be consistent with all related inspired statements and established truths. An intelligent man will not knowingly contradict himself, but men may fail in this regard and make inconsistent statements. Here is where the Bible differs from other books: inspired writ-

ings, if accurately preserved and correctly understood, will never conflict. Hence passages which are obscure or capable of more than one meaning must be interpreted to agree with those which are clear and definite in meaning. Those which are general or incomplete in expression must be considered to include or make room for all specific statements on the same subject. Every verse must be allowed to stand and speak its part and never be completely overshadowed or denied by another.

There is some danger in interpreting by means of parallels too exclusively. Every passage must be read as fully as possible in its own context and by its own wording, or we cannot even tell whether another is parallel with it. One cannot be a guide to or limitation on the meaning of the other unless they treat of the same subject. The same words may be prominent in two passages and still not be on the same specific subject: e.g. "faith" in Romans 10:17 and 14:23.

A real knowledge of any Bible subject is formed by observing and comparing all the statements relating to that subject: i. e. by a true inductive investigation of all the truth.

INFERENCES AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE SCRIPTURE

In order to comprehend and apply the full teaching of the Bible it is often necessary to draw some inferences or see the implications which are clearly associated with its words. In fact, we often intend to convey somewhat more thought than we formally express because we expect the hearer or reader to draw the necessary inferences. One clear statement, when understood and fully accepted, establishes in the mind all the immediate and necessary inferences such as the converse and obverse of the same, and refutes all which actually contradict it. In a broad and practical sense we fully interpret a passage only when we can safely and accurately draw the immediate inferences. In drawing even the simplest inferences our accuracy depends upon

the correctness of our understanding of the original statement, not as it appears we may use it, but exactly as its author intended it. On the one hand, it is not fair to dodge the clear, immediate inference of a God-given truth or command. On the other hand, although such inferences are binding on the conscience of the person who sees them, they must be regarded as human statements liable to human error. They may be taught as our conclusions and have some importance; but they must not be bound upon others as the actual words of scripture, or be made a test of fellowship excluding those who cannot see them as the real meaning of divine utterances.

Often errors are committed, not in the simple reading of the Bible, but in the use made of it in constructing conclusions or systems of doctrine. Many devout persons seem able to put two and two together and seven, if they feel the seven is devout enough; others add two and two and get twenty-two. Think through the following principles and try them out for truth: (1) No Bible verse can honestly be used as authority for anything except the one meaning it was intended to convey; (2) No statement denies anything except that to which it is essentially opposed; (3) A passage of scripture actually supports only that conclusion which must be true if it is true --only necessary inferences from intended meaning--not merely possible or probable implications; (4) Analogies may clarify an affirmation, or indicate its probability, but they furnish no positive proof of any inferential conclusion; (5) There cannot be proof for more in the conclusion than is actually contained in the premises, or evidence from which the conclusion is drawn. If these were carefully observed, many faulty conclusions now common would be avoided.

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1. Rom. 10:17; John 20:30,31
 2. Acts 20:32
 3. I Cor. 2:6-16

4. Rom. 3:24-26; 5:6-11; Heb. 2:9; 10:8-14; Isa. 53:4-12; Mt. 20:28; I John 2:2; 4:10; I Pet. 1:18,19 2:24.
5. John 14:3; Acts 1:11; I Thess. 4:16,17.
6. Acts 2:38; 22:16; I Pet. 3:21.